

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 30, 2020

The Honorable Eugene Scalia  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Scalia:

We are writing to follow up on Rep. Sablan's letter of June 12 which expressed concern regarding the potential exclusion of workers with Commonwealth-only Transitional Worker (CW-1) status from eligibility for the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program and, in consequence, the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program. It is our understanding that the U.S. Department of Labor recently informed the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Department of Labor that CW-1 workers, who are about half the workforce of the CNMI, may be categorically disqualified from PUA.

The CARES Act was enacted amid an unprecedented national emergency and public health crisis caused by COVID-19, and the expanded unemployment benefits were created to provide a critical lifeline for millions of Americans throughout our country and the territories. The CARES Act explicitly defines "covered individual" for PUA without regard to immigration status as per Sec. 2102(a)(3), in keeping with standard unemployment compensation practice.

Indeed, CW-1 workers are lawfully present and authorized to work in the Marianas and, as such, they should not be categorically disqualified for PUA. However, your Department has thus far applied unnecessarily narrow and non-regular unemployment compensation restrictive criteria. This contradicts Congressional intent and would deny CW-1 workers the basic economic support needed to avoid devastating consequences for them, their families, and the economy of CNMI. As a result, we urge you to work with CNMI's Department of Labor to ensure PUA is open to CW-1 workers impacted by COVID-19.

Given the urgency of the situation, please respond to this letter as soon as possible, and let us know the steps the Department is taking to ensure that these Marianas workers can access the unemployment benefits they need and are entitled to under federal law.

Sincerely,



Rep. Richard E. Neal  
Chairman  
Committee on Ways and Means



Sen. Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Finance